

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 5082

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON TRUDEAU'S TV INTERVIEW

REF: OTTAWA 5069

1. ON RE-READING TRANSCRIPT OF BRUCE PHILLIPS' DECEMBER 26
TV INTERVIEW WITH TRUDEAU, AND ON FURTHER REFLECTION, WE HAVE
FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS. FIRST, WE ARE STRUCK BY CALM,
DETACHED, ALMOST OLYMPIAN MANNER IN WHICH TRUDEAU DISCUSSED HIS
POSITION ON QUEBEC AND HIS POLICIES GENERALLY. FOR EXAMPLE,
WHEN PHILLIPS ASSERTED THAT THE PM'S PROGRAM OVER PAST TEN
YEARS FAILED TO PREVENT ELECTION OF A SEPARATIST GOVERNMENT IN
QUEBEC, AND THAT "SOMETHING ELSE MUST BE NEEDED NOW", TRUDEAU
MERELY SHRUGGED AND SAID "THAT'S YOUR CONCLUSION, BUT IT'S NOT
MINE." HE WENT ON TO ARGUE THAT HIS SOLUTIONS ARE STILL CORRECT
AND THAT CANADIANS SHOULD EITHER ACCEPT THEM OR FIND SOMEONE
ELSE AS THEIR LEADER. IN BRIEF, HE SPOKE AS ONE WHO IS
SUPREMELY CONFIDENT OF HIMSELF AND ALMOST INDIFFERENT WHETHER
MOST PEOPLE AGREED WITH HIS POSITIONS.

2. SECOND, WE ARE STRUCK BY HOW FIRMLY TRUDEAU RULED OUT ANY
LOOSER FORM OF CONFEDERATION FOR CANADA. PARTICULARLY SINCE
THE NOVEMBER 15 PQ VICTORY, HE HAS REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR THAT
HE FAVORS A STRONG FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THAT HE IS OPPOSED TO
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DECENTRALIZATION AS A WAY OF DEALING WITH QUEBEC SEPARATISM.
HOWEVER, IN THIS INTERVIEW HE EXPANDED ON THE THEME AND MADE THIS
ARGUMENT MORE EMPHATICALLY, TO THE POINT WHERE IT SEEMS TO US
THAT IT MAY BE POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR TRUDEAU TO CHANGE HIS
POSITION IN FUTURE. SPECIFICALLY, HE PROCLAIMED: "JUST AS I
WOULDN'T LEAD THE COUNTRY INTO A CIVIL WAR, I WOULDN'T LEAD

THE COUNTRY IN THAT DIRECTION (I.E., A LOOSER FORM OF CONFEDERATION) AND I THINK IT'S A GOOD THING THAT CANADIANS WILL HAVE TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS AND DECIDE WHAT IS THEIR VIEW". IT MAY BE THAT MOST CANADIANS WILL EVENTUALLY DECIDE TRUDEAU'S CONCEPT OF FEDERALISM IS CORRECT, BUT WE DOUBT THEY SHARE HIS VIEW AT THIS TIME.
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